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AUTHOR	Annarella, Lorie A.
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ABSTRACT

Eliciting creativity in every student in the classroom can be a realistic goal for classroom teachers. Teaching creatively can include: embracing a student-centered learning approach; using thematic approaches to content area subjects, which also promotes motivation; using a cooperative learning group process; and utilizing creative arts. Creativity embraces form and structure as well as freedom of thought and expression, and within it, the processes of ideas and practicality can operate in unison. Highly creative children have different learning patterns and divergent thinking skills, and many children in the classroom exhibit high creativity. Teachers must take this into account and utilize a creativity approach, teaching children that to be creative and different is to be truly outstanding. (Contains 14 references.) (EF)

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Article submitted: **Making Creativity and Imagination Part of the Curriculum**

Dr. Lorie A. Annarella is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Il. Her research interests lie in the development of Arts Education within the curriculum.

Dr. Lorie A. Annarella
1340 Gilbert Ave.
Downers Grove, IL 60515
Phone: 630-515-8078
e-mail: L-Annarella@neiu.edu

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L Annarella

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Making Creativity and Imagination Part of the Curriculum

Eliciting creativity in every student in the classroom can be a realistic goal for classroom teachers. Many teachers envision that the teaching of creativity will produce a classroom of undisciplined and rowdy students. Actually, just the opposite is true. Structure is the basic form in which our society has long lived. Without basic structure, our lives within a society would be in great strife. Children then, must be taught to function within the bounds of organization and structure. Creativity can also be taught by using form and structure as a guideline in mentoring students toward discovery and inventiveness. Why not then allow validation of students creative acts as they discover for themselves the joy of learning new concepts. Form and structure will then become an essential part of the developmental process to cognitive learning and creative thinking.

Teaching Creativity Is to Teach Creatively

When a teacher teaches creatively, students will become energized from the mere fact that their teacher is acknowledging that content area subjects need to become a part of their every day life. If the teacher is intent of researching topics in a different way, other than work sheets and rote memory, students will become intrigued with the knowledge that they too can learn through hands-on participation. Students have a tendency to emulate through their studies the way they are being taught.

What Can a Teacher Do?

There are things that we can do as teachers to encourage creativity and inventiveness in our students. One way is to embrace a student centered learning approach. When learning is student centered, it empowers the student to a greater level of understanding and trust. Teachers can do this by asking student open-ended questions that require no set or predetermined answer. Asking students to think about a topic and to offer their opinion on the subject is a concrete way to elicit a creative response.

Thematic approaches to teaching content area subjects also helps to promote motivation as well as creativity in the classroom. Students learn through project research and development of ideas through theme. Thematic teaching can cause a "ripple effect." The focus of each idea, experience, or subject that becomes a theme and opens up a wealth of instructional opportunities is part of flow from thematic teaching (Cox, 1996).

Students also learn creatively through the cooperative learning group process. It is in the group setting that they learn from others ideas and to test their own ideas in an atmosphere that requires less risk taking. When the teacher is nonjudgemental to students' ideas, they become more comfortable in expressing new thoughts and insights. Students need to be encouraged to test out their theories and not to be afraid of failure. They need to be

taught that through failure comes understanding and the development of new and sometimes better ideas.

The use of creative arts in the classroom such as creative drama techniques, can be a useful tool in developing creativity and imagination in students. Drama can help to create an excitement of building new lines of understanding and self expression through the use of improvisation, visualizing and imaging. One way to accomplish this is through use of the fantasy trip (Polsky, p.8). It is a very effective way to have each student get in touch with his/her imagination. While engaging in the fantasy, the student can learn to accept the visualization his mind's eye has developed for him. He/she can create his/her own fantasy situation within the bounds of the fantasy guide. It is in these types of situations that the student can be not only creative, but can also be in tune with emotions and intuition, as they learn to trust in themselves and their ideas.

Creativity and Imagination as an Art Form

Spontaneous art can be used to activate the imagination. There are no rules and there is no instruction. Mixing of paint and introduction to form is not taught. Somehow the concentration on what is being drawn or painted releases energy. The unconscious takes over and helps with the release of energy. Feeling becomes a reality. Ideas and feelings and emotions take on a form. Therefore, these feelings and emotions and ideas

become real. "It is the language of feeling and emotion. No one should doubt the importance of being in touch with our emotional life which so often determines success and failure in our ventures." (Bennet, p. 112) Much of Jung's work reflects on feelings. Feelings guided by the imagination, Jung believes, produces concrete works, and that the senses combined with thinking and feeling contribute an essential part in the learning process. We can draw upon these parallels that are in the creative arts to guide us in our understanding of what creativity is and how we can use the arts to instill motivation and energy in a classroom that encourages and teaches reflective thinking , where the student can think back and draw an understanding of ideas, feelings and emotions that guided her or his thought processes during a specific happening.

The teaching of creativity embraces form and structure as well as freedom of thought and expression. We live within the framework of our lives. Each person is responsible for the creation of the frame of his or her own life. How important it becomes then, to supply students with the necessary tools to create that frame. Howard Worner, Professor Emeritus (2000, Carnegie Mellon University), artist and teacher, has often discussed the importance of utilizing the four corners of any canvas, when he taught drawing and painting to students. As in creating a picture, there are the limits of the four corners of the canvas, there are also limits within our lives. It is very appropriate then to supply the student with an imaginative and creative impetus that can allow the student not

only create or establish the frame for his or her own life, but to supply the tools for the painting of the picture of life. So life then, can be a living picture. One that becomes very personalized and stylized and unique. Developing imaginative and creative abilities can contribute greatly to this process.

Discussion of soft and hard thinking united with the creative process helps one to understand that the process of ideas versus practicality can operate in unison with each other. This idea of both practicality and creativeness operating in unison is also the subject of Betty Edward's, *Drawing on the Artist Within* and *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain.*

It is Edward's belief that drawing can be taught as a basic skill, just as reading and mathematics are taught. She is of the firm belief that perceptual skills can be used to enhance thinking skills. She also proposes, through a series of innovative drawing and visualization techniques, that perceptual skills can be taught. There is much discussion about L-Mode, left hemisphere of the brain--the creative part and R-Mode, the right hemisphere of the brain--the analytical part. Edwards proposes that teaching should not negate the R-Mode hemisphere. Almost all teaching today, as in the past, has been aimed at the education of the L-Mode hemisphere. There should be more teaching strategies that can compensate the R-Mode hemisphere, both then could be equally compensated and learning would then become a more unified entity.

The Power of Imagination

Imagination is the greatest source of creativity. If someone asks you how the weather is today, you have to think of what it was like when you were outside. If it is raining you would have to feel the raindrops in your imagination. You would have to see the clouds in the sky in your mind's eye or in your imagination. In this way we use our imagination everyday. "Imagination creates things that can be or can happen whereas fantasy invents things that are not in existence, which never have been or will be. When fantasy created the Flying Carpet, who could have thought that one day we would be winging our way through space? Both fantasy and imagination are indispensable to a painter." (Stanislavski, p. 52) In An Actor Prepares, the correlation between acting and painting as a cognitive process parallel each other. Both are considered processes that are calling upon the creative state of the mind. In creating, a painter goes to his canvas and colors, an actor turns to his mind, will and feelings. The mobilization of all these inner elements creates a vast network for the production of artistic form for both. Line is very important to the artist. It is of equal importance to the actor. The actor studies, interprets, and delivers the written lines of a play; the painter applies line to create a visualization of an idea.

What Does It Mean to be Highly Creative?

It is interesting to note that for many years the development of creative and imaginative skills was not advocated in the general

classroom. In some academic situations today this type of thinking is still advocated. I remember researching a project some years ago on the creative non-conforming child. I really wanted to understand if there was any research supporting the notion that teaching the creative non-conforming child was different from teaching all students. I found out that there were many students who exhibited the qualities of the creative child. What I found out was, to begin with, highly creative people are not the easiest people to live with. They constantly are prone to ideas, and many creative and imaginative people like to act on their ideas as quickly as possible. Creativity spawns spontaneity. To live and learn creatively cultivates the individualist is an adventurer. If there is a system to follow, it will be their own. Creative students have a tendency not to plan activities, but to wait for developments; and sometimes if there is an existing plan it can change quickly. Most creative people think as individuals; they are tolerant and open-minded and have faith in the goodness of other people as individuals. These are some of the results of the early work of Kenyon Runner. They characterize some of the attributes of the individualist and the creative student. (Torrance, p. 72-73) Creativity in children, Torrance found as Howard Gardner (1982) did, many times becomes lost in adulthood. Torrance was interested in finding out about the environment of the child so that he might be able to discern at what point the creative child's attitude turns away from creativity.

Highly creative children are reputed to have wild and silly ideas.

They can produce ideas that are "off the beaten track, outside the mold." They use unusual details, and their art work is full of nonessential details. Their work is filled with playfulness and humor. (Torrance, p. 78) The rigidity of standardized testing is of little consequence to the creative child. In the creative child, the thinking process always goes on. They always have an idea. The idea may not always be acted out, but nevertheless, the cognitive wheels are always turning. The unpredictability of the creative child can also make life more complicated, since many times their personalities can be an upsetting factor for the group.

Parents of highly creative children focus their values on openness to the child's experiences, intrinsic worth, and enthusiasm and interest. Creative children and adolescents are prone to risk-taking. They seem to enjoy discovering the unknown. "In a study by Hammer (1961) it was found that the 'truly creative' differed from the 'merely faciles' in that they exhibited deeper feelings, greater original responsiveness, preference for the observer role over the participant role, stronger determination and ambition, integration of feminine and masculine components, greater independence, rebelliousness, and self-awareness, stronger needs for self-expression, greater tolerance for discomfort, and a fuller range of emotional expression." (Torrance, p. 82)

Since the creative child finds it difficult to harness energy into everyday tasks, she/he is many times looked at to be a poor student or a

discipline problem, or even sometimes lazy. The creative child can then become withdrawn or rebellious. It is most important not to break the spirit of this type of student. A creative child cannot be forced to learn in many of the conventional ways that the non-creative child learns. Sometimes the creative child prefers to learn on his own by investigating and searching in their learning. Divergent thinking skills, where the child can develop different avenues of learning, become a supportive factor in teaching the creative child.

All Students are Creative

From my experience in the classroom I have found that to a great degree all students exhibit qualities of the creative no-conforming child. But many times teachers do not encourage students to act on their spontaneity and individual ideas because of the fear of not being in control in the classroom and therefore, students always stay in a teacher centered arena where little or no individual exchange of ideas occurs. Risk-taking is a very important factor in order for students to develop cognitive skills. It is important to ask questions in order to seek answers. Yet, today in the classroom there is still too much emphasis placed on the correct question for the student to ask, and the correct one word answer to that question. By questioning, the student is trying to stretch his or her world. So there is no ideal question, just as there is no ideal answer. By our very nature, humans are curious. Students exhibit curiosity in just about everything they participate in. Curiosity is a

wonderful practice. Yet, for years we taught that "curiosity killed the cat; that to be too curious can be harmful." (P.74) It is important that the inherent curiosity in the student be not only satisfied, but encouraged.

"Discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone and thinking something different." (Von Oech, p.7) There are definite suppositions that have been formed about what a person is supposed to do and what a person is not supposed to do in terms of cognitive and creative thinking. Roger von Oech discusses "Mental Locks." They are as follows:

1. The Right Answer
2. That's Not Logical
3. Follow the Rules
4. Be Practical
5. Avoid Ambiguity
6. To Err is Wrong
7. Play is Frivolous
8. That's Not My Area
9. Don't Be Foolish
10. I'm Not Creative

We must rid ourselves of the attitude that thinking in a different way other than the norm is a negative attribute. If we are going to use our imagination we have to learn to trust our imagination. We need to teach this to our students. If we do. the mental locks will soon become unlocked and students will be able to peek into a world of their imagination and inventiveness.

Eliciting creativity and imagination in the classroom can be a realistic goal for the classroom teacher. The difficulty of allowing the creative mind to grow and develop in a world where values are very linear has proposed problems for years. We as teachers have to accept the

challenge to make our teaching styles not only interesting, but student centered where studnts can express ideas and failures as part of the developmental process that enhances learning. We need to mentor, encourage and provide a risk free environment in which they can experiment with ideas in a nonjudgmental way. The paradox lies somewhere in the process where we have made the rules so strict that children replace their creativity for social acceptance. We must then, teach our children that to be creative and different is to be truly outstanding and wonderful.

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